

**Call for workshop participants**  
**Emancipatory Transformations: Engaging Radical Democracy in Kurdistan**  
**3-4 November 2016**  
**University of Sussex**

The many conflicts ravaging the Middle East pose profound questions regarding seemingly intractable and intersecting questions of democracy, political and ethnic pluralism, gender oppression, and ecological despoliation; questions that confront not only the region, but in varying forms, the entire world. As such, they highlight common challenges for humanity. These questions have received some radical and innovative answers in Rojava (Western/Syrian Kurdistan) where an ambitious project of radical democracy and social justice is being implemented despite formidable challenges, including a total war against ISIS.

Central to this project are the principles of democratic confederalism, plurinationalism, revolutionary feminism and social ecology as integral dimensions of the radical wing of the wider Kurdish freedom movement. The Rojava revolution therefore represents a novel form of emancipatory praxis that has profound implications for the region and beyond. Its attempted conjunction of direct democracy, communal economy, gender equality and ecological consciousness under the most unfavourable local and regional conditions in a region ravaged by sectarian conflict calls for engaged and critical dialogue by academics and activists. This is necessary in order to address both its achievements and limitations, to unearth and engage with many questions that remain suspended between a precarious present and uncertain future, and to ask what broader lessons it holds for our understanding of transformative democratic practice in the Middle East and beyond.

This two-day workshop aims to bring together a diverse group of researchers and activists to mutually learn, explore, share, and think of future possibilities for direct democracy and democratic confederalism through the examination of real-world grounded examples from contemporary movements in Rojava (Western Kurdistan) and Bakur (Northern Kurdistan), with careful consideration of the historical context and dynamics of contemporary and past struggles and challenges.

We invite submissions and expressions of interest in participation from researchers, activists, visual artists, filmmakers and others that explore these transformations through a focus on grounded perspectives and practices, situated in broader social, historical, political and ecological context. Specific thematic foci for presentations may include, but are not limited to:

- Democracy and democratic confederalism
- Gender and women's movements
- Pluralism in political practice
- Economic transformations
- Social / political ecology
- Solidarity across social movements within the region or across the world

The workshop will be convened on **3-4 November 2016 in Brighton, UK and at the University of Sussex** through collaboration between the ESRC STEPS Centre (<http://steps-centre.org/>), members of the Sussex Kurdish Community and members of the UK-based Kurdish Solidarity activist community. Travel assistance is available for workshop participants on the basis of need. Abstract submissions for paper presentations, visual exhibitions, film viewings or other presentation formats should include the following information:

- Title of presentation
- Presenter name, affiliation (if applicable) and contact details
- Type of presentation (e.g. paper, visual art / photography, etc.)
- Up to five key words / themes
- Abstract / presentation description of no more than 500 words
- Proposals based on original audio-visual work may also include a sample, either as a URL linking to media, or as images embedded in a Word or PDF document
- A brief statement of need if you wish to be considered for travel assistance.

These should be submitted to Harriet Dudley ([h.dudley@ids.ac.uk](mailto:h.dudley@ids.ac.uk)) no later than 16 September 2016, and selected participants will be notified no later than 30 September 2016.

